

# BOSQUE REDONDO MEMORIAL



In the early 1850s, American expansion into the Territory of New Mexico increased, and Apache and Navajo people resisted fiercely the westering newcomers who encroached on their homelands. In response, General James H. Carleton, U.S. Army, developed a plan to relocate

and control, to contain tribes.

Soldiers under the command of Colonel "Kit" Carson began with raids on the Mescalero Apache Tribe in southern New Mexico, eventually moving on to the Navajo, destroying their fields of corn, and their homes, orchards and livestock.

## The Mescalero Apache

The Mescalero Apache were offered refuge with promises of renewed peace treaty negotiations, and almost 400 Mescalero were moved to the Bosque Redondo. Since it was situated near their homelands, the Mescalero anticipated future agreements. By the fall of 1865, disillusioned with their prospects, they left one night, returning to their lands in the south. The Mescalero had arrived at the Bosque Redondo voluntarily and left freely. In their hearts, they were never captives, and their departure was not an escape.



## The Navajo People, "Dineh"

Such was not the case for the Dineh, compelled to move far from the canyons and mesas that they loved, away from the four sacred mountains, and across three rivers. This separated them spiritually and physically from their world and power. By 1864, Colonel "Kit" Carson (left) had starved the Dineh into submission and almost 8,500 men, women, and children traveled 350 miles under military escort to the

windswept plains of what is now eastern New Mexico. The Navajo People remember the hardships and death many met on that journey as the "Long Walk." They came in several groups, and were put to work building the fort's unfinished adobe walls at a time when they needed to build shelters for their own families.

## The Military Personnel

The soldiers who served at Fort Sumner were originally detailed there to expel rebel forces invading from Texas. By 1862, those forces had been expelled, and the soldiers were reassigned to Fort Sumner. The common tasks they shared with the Navajo and Mescalero Apache provided unique relationships which often grew into friendship, and a reevaluation of the terms 'stranger' and 'enemy' and 'friend.'



The Bosque Redondo Reservation ultimately failed. Despite the Indian's labor at planting crops, digging irrigation ditches and building housing, nothing seemed to work. Insects, drought, and saline soils destroyed the crops. Wood for cooking and heating was too scarce, and the Pecos River's water was not potable. Supplies were stolen, and substandard rations were often sent to feed the thousands of people living there.



In 1868, the U.S. Army finally admitted the failure of the Bosque Redondo. Through the Navajo Treaty \_ signed at Fort Sumner on June 1, 1868 \_ the U.S. Army conceded the right of the Diné to live on their homelands to the west. The treaty gave birth to the Navajo Nation and provided the core of the lands it holds today. On June 18, 1868, the surviving Bosque Redondo internees began the long trek toward home. (First page of the Navajo Treaty, endorsed by President Andrew Johnson is pictured on the left.)

Fort Sumner was decommissioned in 1869. Although some of the buildings were sold to merchant Lucien Maxwell, by the 1890s the unfinished adobe had fallen into ruin. Soon, little was left of a site that had been home to almost 10,000 souls. The Navajo and Mescalero Apache planted thousands of cottonwood trees, and today about 35 of those trees still stand as evidence of this episode in American history.

"I hope to God you will not ask me to go to any other country except my own."

- **Barboncito**, Navajo Chief, May of 1868

"Too few Americans are aware of those dark chapters in our national history when the lands of the Indians were being wrested from them."

- **Tony Hillerman**, author of "A Thief of Time," and the Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee Mysteries



*Navajo woman and baby,  
photographed at Fort Sumner, NM,  
in 1866*

## The Bosque Redondo Memorial



The Bosque Redondo Memorial offers the opportunity to advance the interpretation of Fort Sumner on another level, as a forum for interpretation of the fort and surrounding reservation as one entity.

The Navajo term 'hoshe' or 'hoshone,' which may be translated as 'balance' or 'beauty,' joins the reestablishment of the bosque with the importance of the site. The landscape around the memorial will help visitors to understand this relationship. The architecture offers exhibit space, resource rooms, and educational facilities so young and adult populations from within and far beyond the state of New Mexico may grow close to this important piece of our past.

'Bosque redondo,' or 'circular grove of trees,' describes the groves of cottonwoods on the Pecos River; the image of a cottonwood is the monument's commemorative symbol.



David N. Sloan and Associates, headquartered in Albuquerque, NM, will design the Memorial. David N. Sloan, AIA, is a Navajo architect who has dedicated his firm to furthering the causes of Native American communities. His firm understands the reciprocal relationship between cultural ideas, and the form and organization of the built environment in harmony with Mother Earth.



The Bosque Redondo Memorial will contain Exhibit Space (outlined above in red), a Lobby Area that represent design elements from traditional Mescalero and Navajo dwellings (outlined in yellow), and Administrative Areas (outlined in blue) that include a resource room, library, workrooms and offices.

The Bosque Redondo Memorial is more than a building. The natural habitat along the Pecos River will be restored, and the four cardinal directions will be



acknowledged in the landscaping design. A central area will afford visitor's views towards the Navajo and Mescalero Apache traditional homelands.

